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SPEECH

OF

GOV. DANIEL S. DICKINSON

AN OLD JACKSON DEMOCRAT,

DELIVERED AT THE

GREAT UNION MEETING

Held at the City of Albany, May 20, 1863.



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SPEECH OF GOV. DANIEL S. DICKINSON

Cries of "Dickinson," "Dickinson," "Old War Horse," etc. Mr. Dickinson responded, was received with prolonged applause, and addressed the audience as follows:

MR. PRESIDENT AND FELLOW CITIZENS: That the rebellion is upon us which threatens the very existence of this Union is denied by none; that it is one of such formidable proportions as cannot be handled by political parties, should, I think, be admitted by all. That this war was commenced in a corrupt and perjured conspiracy, and murderous thieving rebellion, will not be denied; that it is intended to overthrow this government no rational man can doubt; and it becomes us as a people, as a whole and united people, without regard to distinctions of caste or party, to come forward, if the government is worth preserving and preserve it. [Applause.] It is as wicked and alarming as its origin was causeless, and no one but a traitor to our government can be found its defender or apologist. It will be found time enough to look after politics, to pack conventions, and make nominations for office, when we find we have a country to govern. [Renewed applause.] For myself, I go with those in this great crisis who sustain the government. I started out in the direction of putting down and overthrowing this rebellion. If I were to go to New York, I would take the route and conveyance that would carry me there, and not one that would take me in the direction of Canada. - [Cheers; a voice, "Bully."] I do not know who my associates are, or whence they came. What they were yesterday is very little concern to me. I would prefer to go with my old personal and political friends, if they go in my direction, and such of them as go with me for putting down this rebellion will have my company; those who do not go for this, will not have my company, as I go with those who strike the earliest and strongest blows

to put down the rebellion with the whole power of the government, [cheers] and enforce unconditional submission at the earliest moment. [Renewed applause.] My convictions on this question are these: while I would prefer going with personal and life-long associates, in crushing out this rebellion, not that I love party less, but that I love country more; [applause] if Democrats won't go with me, I will go with Republicans; if Republicans won't go with me, I will go with Abolitionists, and if Abolitionists won't go with me, and if white men won't go with me, I will go with black men; and if that is treason to party or country, then make the most of it, and they can put it into their pipes and smoke it. [Shouts of applause and laughter.] I hold this great government and its blessed institutions to be more than all political parties; and so help me God, I will never slumber nor sleep until I see the last rebel leader on a gibbet, and the masses in rebellion return to their allegiance and duty. [Cheers.]

In efforts to maintain this government of our fathers in its integrity—to perpetuate the blessings of freedom to coming generations, and to preserve humanity's holy hope, the Union, we have expended hundreds of millions of treasure and offered up hundreds of thousands of our sons on the bloody field of battle; and yet the contest rages in all its fierceness, and rebellion is still striving to fasten its fangs in the throat of the nation. Government must resist or yield the control. The question is one of easy and simple solution. The rebel leaders have repelled, with ineffable scorn, every suggestion of arrangement short of a divided Union; and whoever joins in the cry of stopping the war and restoring the Union before the rebel arms are laid down, is either a traitor or a fool, and should be judged accordingly. It cannot be restored in any other way than by force of arms. It is

our duty now to rally around the old flag and our armies in the field who have so bravely sustained it. The question has been and is whether the government shall exist, and not how it shall be administered. It is above and beyond political parties in their influence for good. It concerns all the people, and all parties alike who desire to preserve the government and maintain free institutions; and the attempt to raise the cry of partisan strife is no more nor less than to give life and aid to the rebellion and embarrass the administration in the prosecution of the war. Some who "have been everything by turns and nothing long," cry out as loudly in the honored name of Democracy as though they had been commissioned to administer its dispensations, and seem to suppose that under the disguise of its shield they may practice such "fantastic tricks before high Heaven as make the angels weep." [Applause.]

They boast of what the party accomplished in its days of pride and power, and so far as most of them are concerned well may they remember its prowess, for they were its opponents as halting, semi-abolitionists, softs, and shysters, and Democratic castigations were not unfrequently administered to their recreant skins. [Shouts of applause and laughter.] Like all new converts and hypocrites, they can not speak three words now but two of them will be Democracy! But the lion's skin was never sufficiently ample to cover the ears of the ass, [laughter] much less to suppress his unmistakable notes; [applause] and when the petty politicians, disguised in Democratic habiliments, have strutted their brief hour and are then exposed to the shame which their fraud demands, it will be seen over again that Democracy is a principle and not a name. It is said to be an instinct of the copperhead to crawl into the burrow of some noble animal; but without regard to its "local habitation," it is a venomous reptile still. The people will judge, as God will judge, of men by their actions, and not by their false pretences and noisy confessions. None will escape by their counterfeit cry of Democracy. The murderous Joab flew from the wrath of the wise King of Judea to the inclosures of the tabernacle, that he might escape the vengeance due to his

crimes; but he was slain while clinging to the very horns of the altar; and those who aid and assist rebellion, will find that even true Democracy will be for them no city of refuge—much less the spurious. [Renewed laughter and applause.] Democracy has been able to survive, and even to dignify terms of reproach; but it was when it was guided by honored and noble leaders, and when its principles were just. But it will be seen that when its name is "stolen to serve the devil in,"—when an odious designation is given its managers befitting their principles, when the weight of such leaders would have broken down Andrew Jackson himself; and when the creed they profess is in itself infamous, the name and those who bear it will each communicate disgrace to the other. The Democracy of General Jackson and his adherents, with principles that "the Union must and shall be preserved," [cheers] is one thing; the self-christened Democracy of copperhead leaders, with principles which aid and encourage rebellion and justify and sympathize with traitors, quite another. The exploit of the eagle which bore away the lamb in his talons was worthy of the admiration of all birds of prey. The poor crow which sought to transport the old ram into the upper region was equally worthy of ridicule. [Roars of laughter and applause.] If our whole people had acted together in this matter, the rebellion would have been crushed a year ago. I started with the idea that the rebellion in arms must be put down by force of arms, and I entertain the same sentiment now. And when that is accomplished, we shall have the "Constitution as it is and the Union as it was." Slavery was no part of either, and if its crockery gets broken in the melee, I shall be heartily glad of it. [Laughter; a voice, "Good."]

I hold to the Democracy of General Jackson, that the "Union must and shall be preserved," [applause] and not to the copperhead Democracy, that we must stop the war and allow rebellion to dictate terms of peace. I would even go with copperheads if they would go to put down the rebellion instead of apologizing for it. This is the ground I took in the beginning, and is the ground I shall maintain to the end. I have made many speeches enforc-

ing these ideas, which have been extensively published, and made the subject of comment, some in rebeledom and some in Europe; but I am happy to say that none of them have been approved by copperhead or rebel journals here, [renewed applause] or pirate-fitting, rebel sympathizing journals in Europe. I repeat, names are not things, nor things names. A rebel against the government, whether in Charleston or Albany—whether he makes it openly or secretly—whether with arms in his hands or secret whispers on his tongue, is equally a traitor to his government. [Cheers.] Convicts in our prisons are clad in a peculiar costume, and trained and dieted in a peculiar manner; but it is not the sentence of the court, the walls of a prison, the striped jacket, the mush and molasses, nor the lock step, that makes the villain. It is the *heart*, whether in broadcloth or beaver—whether inside or outside of prison walls. Those who sympathize with rebellion in the loyal States seem not to have been flattered with much recent success. Toombs boasted some years since that he would call the roll of his slaves in Massachusetts. That being inconvenient, Jeff. Davis called his a few years since in Connecticut, [laughter] but the number was insufficient to satisfy the demand, and the number is daily growing less.

But the copperhead politicians, like their Confederate military friends, are about to make a change of base. [Renewed laughter.] Liberal propositions of peace are to be suspended for a season to make way for free speech. They tell us they are union men and are for free speech. They have been for peace and for settling this terrible war, while they know the rebel leaders will not lay down their arms until their independence as they term it, is acknowledged and the Union dissolved! They declare they are for the re-construction of the Union by peaceful means; yet they know that if we lay down our arms and close this war and patch up a peace, we are at the mercy of the most hellish despotism on earth. But finding that this old idea is pretty much played out, and that they must have a new one, they want something that will draw. [Applause.] You will not hear any more about "liberal propositions of

peace" in a long while. Now, it is all "free speech!" A noisy, blurring braggart and gassy traitor, Villindam [roars of laughter and applause] or Vallandigham, late a member of Congress from Ohio, who has offensively opposed the war and justified the rebellion from the beginning—who has been openly claimed by the rebels as their friend—who strenuously opposed supplies for the war—who was drummed out of a camp of volunteers in his own state [applause—"Good for him—he ought to be hung"]—who, in his last race for Congressional honors, was allowed to remain at home by the loyal people of his district—who reside near the borders of Kentucky—has been arrested by General Burnside, in whose military department he is; ["good"] and the moment he is arrested for some alleged defense in that Military Department—we don't know for what, and his admirers here don't know for what—but by consent, they set up a howl from Richmond to Canada in behalf of "free speech!" Poor Vallandigham! arrested in the night time, and at his own house! as though he ought to have been arrested in somebody's else. [Laughter and applause.] He has been tried by court-martial—he had the assistance of counsel and the attendance of witnesses in his behalf. The evidence has not been published, nor do we know what it was. It is said he was sentenced by the court to imprisonment in Fort Warren, but there is no authority for this declaration. No nation can exist in time of war without the war power. You can't make a woman's school of a great war. [Renewed laughter.] It does not proceed according to statute or the code! There are great principles which civilization has established for their guidance between civilized nations and peoples, but martial law is bounded only by discretion of the Commander-in-Chief. It is from the nature of the case despotic, for war is little else.

Liberty of speech is one thing. Liberty of treason is another. The liberty of speech is sacred; but this does not include the right to act as a spy and convey intelligence to the enemy, which may destroy thousands of the lives of our soldiers—endanger our army and jeopard the existence of government. [Applause.]

Swords and knives are free; but this gives no one the right to commit murder. Fire arms are free, and exempt from seizure on execution, and yet no one has a right to discharge them at his neighbor. Fire is free; but the one who should employ it to destroy the dwelling of his neighbor would be the subject of an "arbitrary arrest"—in his "own house" if he should be found there—"in the presence of his wife and children," if he had them. And these "arbitrary arrests" in criminal law are of daily occurrence, and in martial law of not unfrequent occurrence in all wars,—especially such a war of rebellion as this, with spies and traitors hatching treason and aiding rebellion all along the border. Any lawyer who cannot discriminate between civil law and martial law should be treated for simplicity on the brain. [Shouts of applause and laughter.] The functions of martial law and the authority upon which it rests, was freely stated by me last fall in a speech made at the Cooper Institute. It is a dangerous power, but its absence would be more dangerous. It is liable to abuse, but no war can be conducted without it—especially such a war as this. Whether it was judiciously exercised in this case, and whether the paltry fellow was worth arresting, I do not know, and do not, for all present purposes, care. All we can inquire of is, does the power exist, and if it does, was it exercised in good faith? If it was, even though General Burnside was mistaken, he is to be encouraged for his watchfulness and commended for his vigilance. [Applause.] Two great and hasty and noisy meetings have been held, one in New York, at which Captain Rynders and others spoke, and even the late Thomas H. Seymour, of Connecticut, preached, [laughter] and one at this capitol, where his Excellency Governor Seymour administered upon the wrongs of Vallandigham by letter. The Governor says this arrest is full of danger to our homes. Who is in danger in his home, pray tell? No one unless he has done something to put himself in danger. The pious thief and burglar, Gordon, of Brooklyn, who attended conferences and prayer meetings with the young ladies, discovered where they kept their jewelry and then entered their houses and robbed them by

night, was a long time in danger in his home [roars of laughter] and by and by the cruel police went in large number and with their murderous clubs, and in the night time, too, and "arbitrarily arrested" him and put him in prison, and the Court sent him to State prison for twenty years. All for stealing a few trinkets. Yet Governor Seymour says nothing. Had he connived with rebellion for the overthrow of the only great free government on earth, and he had been detected and arrested, it would have been "arbitrary." But it interfered with the "freedom of speech." How? Who has objected to the freest possible discussion? Freedom of speech does not confer the right to go before an enemy and stimulate mutiny and disobedience and recommend desertion. It does not justify any thing, which, in a time of war, is calculated and intended to weaken the military arm of the government. The Governor complains that the Governors of some of the Western States have sunk into insignificance. It is certainly time to be on the lookout. I hope whatever may become of other States, New York may not find herself in the same pitiful category. [Laughter.] It is certainly a humiliating position for the first State of the Union, when the scales of our being as a nation are vibrating—when our children are dying by thousands in defence of the Union, to see the chief magistrate turn from contemplating the picture with anxious solicitude, to denounce the government and encourage the rebellion, because a ranting, foaming, frothing, gasdonading traitor [cries of "hang him, hang him"] has been charged with an offense cognizable by martial law, and has been arrested, and after a full and fair trial, convicted. This is the species of support which Governor Seymour, and those who are with him from the beginning of the war, have given to the administration, and this he calls a "generous" one! They now propose to "pause," as he tells us; and if they will but "pause" in their assaults upon the administration—in their proclaimed sympathy with traitors, and in their encouragement to rebellion, they will confer a favor upon the present and coming generations. [Applause.] The people cry "pause," but it is to those engaged in assaults upon the administration,

not to those who are striking death blows at the rebellion. They cry "pause," but they cry to those who give aid, encouragement and comfort to the rebels. The soldiers are among us here, and they cry "pause" in stimulating the rebellion. They have perilled their lives in defense of the government. With heads uncovered and with bosoms bared, they have met the enemies of free institutions upon the battle field, [vociferous cheering] and they cry "pause" to you who are encouraging this rebellion. The wife and the mother cry "pause" to you who by sympathizing with traitors encourage resistance to the government and its institutions; they conjure you to pause—pause in your mad career; the husband and the son have been slain; your partizanship gives aid to the rebels. The father cries "pause" in your encouragement to rebels in arms. "Joseph is not, Simeon is not, and you would take away Benjamin also." There are others who cry "pause." I adopt the language of his Excellency, the Governor, and cry "pause." Our sons and brothers sleep in death. Tongues which are silent in death, could they speak, would cry "pause"—they would say you have marched us here—we come to defend our country's flag—we come to vindicate the honor of our nation—we come to preserve the holy memories that cluster around the banner for which our fathers fought; you have lent hope and encouragement to the rebellion; "pause" in your course. Yes, I say "pause." When you sit down at your table "pause"—set a vacant chair there—a skeleton will be at your side. When you proceed to your chamber "pause;" death will be there. At the hour of midnight "pause;" the pale face and skeleton finger will point to the record of aid you have given the rebels in arms against the government. If these men are not punished at judgment, if not here, I shall be mistaken. For men who assist in this rebellion if not executed and damned eternally hereafter, hemp will lose its value, and hell will forfeit its character for misuse. [Great cheering.]

Men are mistaken in supposing that they can form parties on the issues of our country's fate. The great popular mind sways to and fro; it may be diverted from the purpose, but it will be ever constant

and true in upholding the government. Who believes that this rebellion can be disposed of in any other way except by the power of the sword? I took the position in the beginning, and I take it at the end. All rebeldom can have peace when they lay down their arms. But there are men here who continually prate of their democracy—great democrats—they know all about democracy, and to judge by their actions they care very little about anything else. You recollect the boy said to his father, suppose we call our old horse's tail a leg, how many legs would he have? Five, said the father. Oh, no, said the boy; calling the tail a leg would not make it a leg. [Roars of laughter.] Men may call themselves Democrats, but it does not make them Democrats. The first great principle of democracy is, according to Jackson, "the Union must and shall be preserved," [applause,] and there is where I stand tonight—it must be preserved, no matter from what quarter the assaults may come. It must be preserved against all its enemies. [Renewed applause.] Why, sir, pretended leaders of democracy as we now have would have swamped even Andrew Jackson in his first quarter. [Roars of laughter.] By their fruit ye shall know them. Now is the time for every Democrat, for every Jackson Democrat, for every Republican, for every man who is an honest man, to assist in maintaining the government and putting down the rebellion. [Voice: "How'r you going to put it down?"] Put it down as Saul put down Agag, hew it right down through. [Applause.]

But, fellow-citizens, the thing will all come right by and by. The returned soldiers,—and they are in all parts of this mass of people,—will bring home their stories, and will tell copperheadism how much advantage there is to be gained by shaping their course for political purposes, and giving the country the go-by. What we want is to concentrate public opinion—we want to bring the whole force and power of the government where it can rest on this rebellion; and it must be done. The masks must be torn from the faces of all copperheads. One side or the other of this question must be taken. One is the side of truth, fair dealing,

honesty in the support of the government; the other is the side of falsehood and quibbling and denunciation of the government. The path of falsehood leads to the rebel ranks, and in expressions of sympathy and condolence with and for traitors. Let each man take his position. I have taken mine on the side of truth, justice and the government. I know what this government and these institutions have done for the great cause of freedom and knowledge and science. I intend to maintain my position. Let them attempt to drive me from it. Let them come with all their party machinery and party whips. "Lay on, Macduff, and d—d be he who first cries hold!—enough." [Renewed applause.] The Abolitionists have been forty years endeavoring to destroy slavery, but Jeff. Davis, by making and waging war upon the government, has destroyed it in two years. ["Bully for you."] He has buried it past resurrection, and all the people cry Amen! I never agreed with the Abolitionists. They abused me and I abused them. [Laughter.] I settle my accounts as I go along; and I don't know that our disagreement is any reason why they should stand back and see the government destroyed, and I know it is no reason why I should. [Applause.]

Mr. D. alluded to the future of this country, peopled, as it would be at no distant day, by a hundred millions of souls—to the distress in the Old World and the calls upon the new for bread—to the abandonment of home and all dear to them, and their coming here and enjoying the blessings of free institutions with all the benefits they confer. He did not see how any man of foreign birth could take the British side of this question. It is not a struggle between Abolitionism and slavery. It is a struggle between free government and despotism and aristocracy

throughout the world. It is a struggle for British rule on this continent. It is the same spirit of despotism which abolished the Irish Parliament, and the same that put the iron heel on the neck of Ireland. No such government as ours ever existed, or will exist again. Destroy it, overthrow it, and hope for a season will bid the world farewell. Our country is not a nation of nobility and crowned heads.

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay;
Princes and lords may flourish or may fade;
A breath can make them as a breath hath made;
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroy'd can never be supplied."

What I wish is no party advantage in this matter; what I wish to see my fellow-citizens, of all parties and all creeds, rise up to the importance of this question; what I wish is to throttle every miserable politician who carries his party banner above that of his country, until he shall cry "pause." [Cries of "good," and applause.] What I wish is to see our brave soldiers sustained in the field. [Renewed applause and three cheers.] What I wish is to see the loyal masses in the rebel States strengthened and sustained; what I wish is that disloyal and bad men may be brought to condign punishment.

I thank you, fellow-citizens, for this opportunity to address you. I came not prepared; but this is a subject on which I can talk whenever I get an opportunity. [Applause.] I hope to live to see this country vindicated. I believe I shall live to see the clouds driven from the sky, and all the stars in our bright escutcheon left, and the blessings of free government perpetuated.

Mr. Dickinson took his seat, the audience giving him cheer after cheer. The band responded by playing "Columbia, the gem of the ocean."

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